

Are You and I On the Road To Emmaus?

Let Us Pray: Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen**

The Gospel reading has taken us back in time from last week. It is early Easter morning. The busy Passover Festival week in Jerusalem is over. People from all over the Empire had flocked to the city for this celebration. Many people watched as Jesus entered the city. They witnessed the accusations made against him, His trial and ultimately His crucifixion. Now people are on their way back to their homes. Among them are two of Jesus's followers, Cleopas and his companion. No one knows who this person is. Families often went to the Passover festival together, so this person could have been a brother, a parent, a wife. Could the companion on the road to Emmaus be you or me?

Before the two companions had left Jerusalem and the other Apostles, Mary Magdalene and the other women had come to the Apostles to tell the exciting news that the tomb was empty. Two men in dazzling white had spoken to them saying, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified, and on the third day rise again,". These women remembered his words and returned and told the Apostles. These women who were also followers of Jesus were not believed, Peter went to the tomb to look for himself.

Cleopas and his companion are walking on the road discussing what had happened over the last three days. There must have been a buzz of conversation between them and on the road with everyone else also leaving Jerusalem. They were confused and disappointed. They had such expectations for this man Jesus of Nazareth. He was the Messiah, the One who would liberate Israel. He would draw people back to God. He had changed lives. He had changed their life. They expected greater

things to come and now he was gone. The women though said that the tomb was empty! What Happened! A stranger also on the road was listening to them and approached them, asking, "What are you discussing ...?" They were astounded that he was not aware but explained what they knew. Still keeping their eyes shielded to his identity, the stranger, beginning with Moses and the Prophets, told them about his story through the scriptures of the Old Testament. He reminded them that it was necessary that the Messiah should suffer and then enter into glory for our sake so that we may have our sins forgiven one for all. Their hearts burned in their chests.

Jesus kept his identity hidden from them until that evening. After being invited to share a meal: He took the bread, blessed it and broke it. At that time their eyes were opened and Jesus vanished. They returned immediately to the remaining eleven Apostles to tell them that the Lord had risen.

Our eyes are opened to Jesus in our Baptism, when we hear, read, and pray the word, and when we receive Communion. We have not seen the risen Lord yet we believe that he is always with us. Often though, we are the companion of Cleopas, confused, disappointed, angry. Would we recognize Jesus if he was walking with us?

Last week and this week as we read the Gospel's you may have noticed that people didn't know they were in Jesus' presence until he wanted them to know. Sometimes people knew by the breaking of bread or it was the word, "Peace be with you". Last week Jesus only had to say Mary's name. Jesus revealed himself this week after he knew that Cleopas and his companion were ready to understand who he really was. He was not the military leader that was going to save them in this world, but he was achieving victory in a different way through his suffering. He explained how scripture in the Old Testament pointed toward our sins and our need for Jesus and that he would be coming as our Savior.

In the Opening of Genesis they tell that it will be the descendant of

Eve who will crush the serpent. Abraham's son Isaac carries firewood up a mountain so he can be a sacrifice just as Jesus carries a cross. Point by point, Jesus spoke to them on the way to Emmaus until He knew they understood that he was the sacrificial lamb that we celebrate as our risen Lord.

We don't get to see Jesus like they did, but He is in our hearts. He is in that seed that is planted at the time of our Baptism, and we are supported by the Holy Spirit through the Word and Holy Communion.

The world had trouble comprehending this man, Jesus. There was confusion on the road to Emmaus. The world is still on the road to Emmaus every day. It seems that more and more people question the ifs, ands and buts of Christianity, of religion, and its place in their lives. Why is it important? Why do they need it? Just as during the time of Jesus's death and resurrection people were trying to understand what would happen to them without Jesus, we are trying to understand what is happening to our church today. If only someone would appear to us and open our eyes, cause our hearts to burn within us. Open the scriptures to us.

It is up to us! If not us, Who! We must show others the HOPE that is Christ Jesus. The LOVE and COMPASSION that he showed for all his children. Unfortunately some of our Christian brothers and sisters have been hijacked. They speak much louder than we do and are heard in the media, in courtrooms, and state buildings around the world. They are willing to speak out loudly, forgetting the love and compassion. They interpret the Bible literally, word for word, as long as it gets them exactly what they want. Often it is about power over others, women and the oppressed and the fringes of society.

Jesus wants our faith in him to change our behavior for the better. He wants us to act differently. That difference involves Love and Compassion. He wants us to turn our commitment to action. Every religion has the Golden Rule in one form or another. We can't just believe that Christ has risen on this Easter morning. We must behave as though Christ has risen!

By Behaving as though He has risen we will practice our religion by seeking his word and joining him at his table..We will practice Love and Compassion to others, not just believe that it should happen. I am not saying this will be easy. As I said last week it is up to you and me to offer the deep peace that is offered through Jesus Christ to all people. We do not walk to Emmaus alone. We walk with our God. He is with us on our journey of love and compassion, as we show the world that our God is alive, loving, and within us every day.

Perhaps as we walk and we behave with Love and compassion, when we meet a stranger on the road, we too will see that God is alive today and it will encourage us to keep journeying down the road. It is time to reclaim the Christianity that has been Hijacked and put compassion and love back in our faith, so that it brings peace to all on its pathway.

By bringing Peace and living our faith, not just believing, we will see the divine in the eyes of a stranger and realize that we can all live together in this world.

As we travel on the road and to Emmaus this week remember we do not do this alone. It is not an easy road to be bold and behave as Jesus would. Offer love and compassion to all. Recognize Christ in others, the divine in a stranger. It is the pathway to justice, peace, and mercy.

May Peace be with you. Amen